

Surah 42, Ash-Shura (Consultation), Mecca 53

The Quran's Text & Yusuf Ali's translation:

فَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا... ^{up}

42:36. Whatever ye are given (here) is (but) a convenience of this Life:

...وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

but that which is with God is better and more lasting: (it is) for those - who believe and put their trust in their Lord;

وَالَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ ... ^{up}

42:37. - Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds,

... وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

- and, when they are angry even then forgive;

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ ... ^{up}

42: 38. - Those who hearken to their Lord,
- and establish regular prayer;

... وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ...

- who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation;

... وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

- who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance;

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

42: 39. - And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.

Muhammad Asad's Translation:

42:36 AND [remember that] whatever you are given [now] is but for the [passing] enjoyment of life in this world - **whereas that which is with God is far better and more enduring. [It shall be given] to all who attain to faith and in their Sustainer place their trust;**

(42:37) and **who shun the more heinous sins and abominations;** and who, **whenever they are moved to anger, readily forgive;**

(42:38) and who respond to [the call of] their Sustainer and are constant in prayer; **and whose rule [in all matters of common concern] is consultation among themselves;** 38 and who spend on others out of what We provide for them as sustenance; 39 (42:39) **and who, whenever tyranny afflicts them, defend themselves.**

Ali's comments:

4575. Any good (or ill) which is our lot is only a temporary phase to serve the convenience of this life. But there is a higher good, which comes from Allah's own Presence. Such good is both superior in quality, and more permanent. In the same way, any ills that we may suffer in this life, have reference only to the conditions of this our life of probation, The ills that we "earn" in our spiritual Life-such as deprivation of Allah's Grace-are far more momentous and permanent.

4576. The higher and more permanent gifts which come from Allah's Presence are for those who truly worship and serve Allah. These are described by nine of their characteristics: viz.

1. they have Faith: and it follows that
2. they trust in Allah, instead of running after false standards or values:

3. they eschew the more serious offences against Allah's Law, and of course keep clear of any offences against sex (indecentcies);
4. while knowing that they are not themselves perfect, they are ready to forgive others, even though they are sorely tried with anger and provocation;

for the rest see n. 4578.

4577. Here we are speaking of the ordinary man or woman who tries to follow Allah's Law: he or she is not perfect, but at least eschews the major breaches of conduct. For those higher in spiritual degree there is of course a stricter standard. But all are entitled to the blessing of Islam, whatever their degree.

4578. Continuing the enumeration of the characteristics described in n. 4576 above, we have the following further qualities in those who wish to serve Allah.

5. They are ready at all times to hearken to Allah's Signs, or to listen to the admonitions of prophets of Allah, and to follow the true Path, as they understand it;
6. they keep personal contact with Allah, by habits of Prayer and Praise;
7. their conduct in life is open and determined by mutual Consultation between those who are entitled to voice. e.g., in private domestic affairs, as between husband and wife, or other responsible members of the household; in affairs of business, as between partners or parties interested; and in State affairs, as

between rulers and ruled, or as between different departments of administration, to preserve the unity of administration;

8. they do not forget Charity, or the help due to their weaker brethren, out of the wealth or gifts or talents or opportunities, which Allah has provided for themselves; and
9. when other people use them despitefully, they are not cowed down or terrorized into submission and acceptance of evil, but stand up for their rights within the limits mentioned in verse 40. (R).

4579. "Consultation." This is the key-word of the Surah, and suggests the ideal way in which a good man should conduct his affairs, so that, on the one hand, he may not become too egotistical, and, on the other, he may not lightly abandon the responsibilities which devolve on him as a Personality whose development counts in the sight of Allah. See the points in head 7 under n. 4578 above. This principle was applied to its fullest extent by the holy Prophet in his private and public life, and was fully acted upon by the early rulers of Islam. Modern representative government is an attempt-by no means perfect-to apply this principle in State affairs. See my Religious Polity of Islam.

4580. This follows from the high value attached to an individual soul's Personality in Islam. Cf. last note. There are four possible situations that may arise: an individual may have to stand up against an oppressor

1. for his own trampled rights, or
2. for the rights of others within his ken; or

3. a community may have similarly to stand up for its own rights collectively: or

4. for the rights of others.

Nos. 2, 3, and 4 are considered highly meritorious for all, though few have the courage or the spirit to rise to so high a standard.

No. 1 is specially liable to abuse on account of man's selfishness;

Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are also abused by men pretending to motives of public good when they are serving their own personal interests or idiosyncrasies; hence the qualifications mentioned in the next four verses and the notes thereto.

Asad's comments:

38 This particular **qualification of true believers** - regarded by the Prophet's Companions as so important that they always referred to this surah by the key- word "consultation" (shara) - has a double import: firstly, it is meant to remind all followers of the Qur'an that they must remain united within one single community (ummah); and, secondly, **it lays down the principle that all their communal business must be transacted in mutual consultation.** (For the political implications of this principle, see State and Government, pp.44 ff).

39 See note 4 on 2:3. Following as it does immediately upon the call to communal unity and consultation, the "spending on others" bears here the general connotation of social justice.